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New York

Chairperson: Mrs. Juul ..... (Norway)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 82 to 97 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson: I should like first to make a statement in my personal capacity as Chairperson of the Committee.

It appears that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has conducted a nuclear-test explosion. Let there be no doubt about my views on this. The test explosion is deplorable, irresponsible and totally unacceptable. It threatens regional as well as global peace and security. I trust that the Security Council will take appropriate action, and I call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear-weapon State.

As there is a long list of speakers for this meeting, I would once again strongly request delegations strictly to abide by the agreed time limit for their statements, so that we can conclude our general debate this morning and start the second phase of our work this afternoon, as planned.

Mr. Dilja (Albania): Madam Chairperson, allow me to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are fully confident that, under your leadership, we will further the work of the Committee. The Albanian delegation offers you and the Bureau its full support.

Albania aligns itself with the statement of the European Union delivered in the Committee by the representative of Finland at the beginning of the general debate. In its statement, my delegation would like to make further brief remarks.

The serious discussions and negotiations that take place during the Committee's deliberations reflect the significance of its agenda as well as the need for a broader international consensus on disarmament issues: terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the direct means of their delivery, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and so on continue to represent dangerous threats to international peace, security and stability. Maintaining peace and security in the face of these new threats and challenges is a complex and multidimensional task. We should place greater emphasis on preventing threats and conflicts before they develop.

Combating terrorism is a top priority, as it represents one of the major threats to international peace and security. While welcoming the new Global Counter-terrorism Strategy, adopted by consensus here at the United Nations, we emphasize the importance of concerted efforts in agreeing and finalizing a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

The Albanian Government reiterates its condemnation of any form or manifestation of terrorism. It remains committed to making its contribution and fulfilling its obligations as an active member of the international coalition against terrorism.

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Albania has signed, ratified and is implementing on an ongoing basis the 12 United Nations conventions and protocols against terrorism. We have extended the implementation of the various relevant Security Council resolutions, cooperating closely with its respective structures and duly submitting the required regular reports.

Albania supports an effective strategy designed to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery as well as their falling into the hands of terrorists or non-State actors. Real progress in those very important areas is possible if all Member States fulfil their obligations regarding nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Albania attaches particular importance to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), recognizing it as an entirely appropriate measure to counter the threat. We have taken various appropriate legislative actions in order to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We remain committed, as required, to maintaining and developing appropriate and effective measures as well as adopting and enforcing additional appropriate and effective laws in that respect.

Albania takes this opportunity to renew its full commitment to the disarmament treaties and instruments to which it is a party.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a crucial multilateral instrument of the non-proliferation regime and remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament process. This regime must be strengthened and improved.

As a non-nuclear-weapon State, the Republic of Albania remains faithful to the spirit of the NPT and reiterates its full political will to strengthen its commitment to non-proliferation. We also express our support for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and for the strengthening of the role of the Security Council in reacting to any challenges or threats posed to international peace and security by the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Albania expresses the deepest concern regarding the most recent developments in North Korea. We oppose and condemn the nuclear test it carried out yesterday. That test is, as you mentioned, Madam, deplorable. We share the international community's reaction that the necessary pressure must be brought to bear on North Korea against such conduct.

As concerns Iran, we believe that responding positively to the demands formulated by the IAEA and complying with Security Council resolution 1696 (2006) is the most positive and constructive approach. We support all of the multilateral diplomatic efforts that have been made in this respect.

We believe that parallel efforts should be made to strengthen the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. Threats from biological and chemical weapons remain a concern. Further strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention is essential to counter such threats. Albania supports the strict application of the Chemical Weapons Convention. To that end, we have undertaken national efforts and concrete implementation measures. Chemical weapons stockpiles are subject to destruction. We have just begun implementation of the national programme on the destruction of chemical weapons, with the intention of, and a commitment to, destroying all stockpiles of such weapons before the deadline set in the Convention — that is, by 2007.

Albania aligns itself with the joint ministerial statement made in support of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its entry into force on the tenth anniversary of the Treaty's opening for signature, as we consider it an important instrument in the field of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

In conclusion, I should like to touch briefly on the issue of small arms and light weapons. As the Secretary-General underlines in his latest report on the work of the Organization, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons continues to pose a serious threat to peace, security, stability and to the well-being of peoples in many regions of the world. We share the view that further concrete action is needed on small arms and light weapons at the national, regional and global levels. Such weapons may be small, but they cause massive destruction.

In that context, Albania deems the issue of the control of small arms and light weapons to be directly related to national, regional and international security. Albania remains committed to the United Nations Programme of Action as the framework for both legal

and practical measures against the illicit trade in such weapons. The Albanian Government remains determined to further increase national capacity in the field of control over small arms and light weapons through various simultaneous and integrated measures on transfer, stockpile management and destruction. The amount of resources invested in this effort and the work already done reflect our determination to continue to make a valuable contribution with regard to small arms and light weapons.

We will continue to support all goals, initiatives and obligations related to such arms and to pay the utmost attention to the fulfilment of our obligations deriving from international instruments.

A regional perspective and cooperation on this matter is of paramount importance and of common interest. South-Eastern Europe has recently proved the benefits of such cooperation. Regional initiatives on combating the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as initiatives at the national level for their collection, destruction and non-proliferation have been concrete and rewarding in the region, including in Kosovo. They have been supported and assisted by various international organizations such as the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and so on. We believe that this spirit of cooperation should continue in our region, which experienced firsthand the dangers posed by these weapons during the wars of the 1990s.

In line with the need to control the undesirable proliferation of conventional arms, Albania favours an international, legally binding treaty on the trade in all conventional weapons. We think that this is a positive development and concur with the proposal to start a United Nations-based process to take forward action in that area.

The Chairperson: I see that we have been joined this morning by our junior colleagues from the Disarmament Fellowship Programme. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to extend a warm welcome to them. It is my sincere hope that this next generation of disarmament experts will be able to gain invaluable experience by closely observing the work of our Committee during this session.

Mr. Moungara Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Madam Chairperson, like the delegations that spoke before me, which eloquently expressed the high esteem in which they hold you and the other members of the Bureau, I, too, should like to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and to assure you of the full cooperation of the delegation of Gabon. My delegation believes that your election is of symbolic importance, first, because you are the first woman to chair the Committee, and, secondly, because all are aware of the important contribution of your country to peace in the world.

I should like also to align myself with the statements made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of Africa and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

When the General Assembly adopted its very first resolution, in 1946, whereby it established a commission to deal with the problem raised by the discovery of atomic energy, it was aware of the very real dangers posed by atomic weapons. In subparagraph 4 (c) of that resolution, the General Assembly committed itself to eliminate atomic weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

However, 50 years later, weapons of mass destruction, and nuclear weapons in particular, continue to pose serious threats to international peace and security. Not only do strategic defence doctrines based on the use of these types of weapons continue to exist, but new, updated weapons continue to be produced.

The increase in military expenditures brings to mind recalls the period following the Second World War, while at the same time official development assistance continues to decrease. The resources sunk into armaments far exceed those allocated to social services.

Thus it is only appropriate that the statements made throughout the general debate of our Committee have deplored the lack of progress made in the process of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. In fact, the negotiations held to date, both within multilateral disarmament mechanisms and within the bilateral framework of the nuclear Powers, have not, unfortunately, led to the hoped-for results. Even worse, in recent years there has been a reversal in efforts to rid the world of the nuclear threat. The failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was a real setback for the disarmament process.

With regard to conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons, the failure in July 2006 of the Conference to Review the Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects was a regrettable setback. Indeed, only the year before, the adoption of an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, as well as consultations on the negotiation of a legal instrument on brokering, had raised hopes of an expanded, more coordinated struggle against the scourge of the illicit and destabilizing movement of small arms and light weapons.

Our collective security, which also requires the achievement of general and complete disarmament, cannot be ensured by the status quo. As my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean Ping, said on 25 September before the General Assembly,

> "we have the moral duty and common responsibility to renew disarmament negotiations, particularly in the nuclear sphere". (*see A/61/PV.18*)

Such negotiations must take place within the multilateral mechanisms created to that end, namely within the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament.

Gabon has signed and ratified most of the international instruments in the area of disarmament, including the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Ottawa Convention against the production and use of anti-personnel mines. In addition, it has on its territory an auxiliary seismic monitoring station as part of the CTBT's International Monitoring System. That represents its modest contribution to the achievement of the universality of multilateral legal instruments on disarmament.

We therefore invite those States Members of the United Nations that have not yet done so to become parties to those disarmament and non-proliferation instruments in the interests of peace and security. Accession to all those treaties, as well as their strict implementation in good faith, would greatly contribute to advancing the process of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The challenges posed by terrorist threats means that there can be no letup in our efforts and no procrastination, as has been the case in the area of disarmament to date. Thus Gabon welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation and the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention Against Nuclear Terrorism.

But we must make further progress. We need, inter alia, to begin consultations aimed at starting negotiations leading to the adoption of a binding instrument banning the production of fissile material. Strengthening control on nuclear waste, including that resulting from the peaceful use of atomic energy, is, we think, an important step that would minimize the likelihood of small terrorist groups' manufacturing "dirty bombs" or, to use a more technical term, radiological devices. We should also ensure stricter control of the movement of dual-use chemicals.

In the area of light weapons, the failure of the Review Conference on the Programme of Action, which I mentioned earlier, should not serve as a pretext for disregarding the Programme or international instruments on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons. Our efforts should focus on ways to help the poorest member States to make use of those two instruments, which are vital in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

My delegation believes that, to be effective, efforts towards non-proliferation must be accompanied by a genuine commitment on the part of all to disarmament, the promotion of dialogue in international relations, and the taking into account of the energy and security requirements of all Member States.

As the Secretary-General has said, we have a choice: either we devote ourselves seriously and in good faith to the resumption and the conclusion of the disarmament process, or we will have to bear the heavy responsibility of an apocalyptic nuclear disaster.

Mr. Alemo (Ethiopia): Madam Chairperson, allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I should like also to express our sincere appreciation to your predecessor for his commendable chairmanship of the Committee at its sixtieth session.

My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, which

succinctly reiterated the Movement's longstanding positions on disarmament and international security, as expressed at the fourteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Havana from 14 to 16 September 2006, as well as with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the African Group, reflecting our common views on the issues involved.

As the maintenance of peace and security is among the founding principles and purposes of the United Nations — as enshrined in its Charter — the promotion of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation on a wider scale remains of crucial significance.

In the case of Ethiopia, the ongoing promotion of peace and stability both at home and within the subregion, coupled with the dedication of every available resource to the multifaceted economic and social endeavours under way at the national level, have not only placed Ethiopia firmly on the path of overall growth and development but have also made it a pillar of peace and partnership within the Horn of Africa and beyond.

Ethiopia, having successfully embarked upon the path of peace, democracy and development, and having made substantial progress along this promising path over the past 15 years, since the demise of the military regime that ruled the country, has found its paramount challenge to be the struggle against its principal enemy: poverty and poverty-related issues.

That is the reason why Ethiopia attaches paramount importance to the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. In terms of practical measures, Ethiopia has already signed, ratified or acceded to a number of international and regional instruments aimed at the promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation, and it will continue to do so. More importantly, it has faithfully upheld their principles by way of strict adherence to its treaty obligations in the course of their implementation.

In that regard, allow me to elaborate on Ethiopia's firm position and commitment to do its utmost to play its part in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation, particularly regarding the aspects that concern it most.

Ethiopia has been fully implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as the Nairobi Protocol on small arms and light weapons, in close collaboration with all parties concerned. To that end, the Federal Police Commission has been charged with serving as the national focal point for small arms and light weapons. Measures have also been taken to revise legislation concerning arms and ammunition so as to make it more robust and comprehensive, in the light of international considerations and the extent of the problem.

Preparations are under way to destroy various types of small arms and light weapons, seized and collected from all over the country through searches and surprise checks. Furthermore, a national plan of action aimed at enabling the country to successfully meet its obligations in the area of small arms and light weapons is currently being developed. A central registration unit for small arms and light weapons is in the process of being established at the federal level. Personnel training and other related activities are being undertaken. These are all critical national tasks for which the assistance of developed countries, as well as that of the relevant organs of the United Nations, remains crucial, especially in the area of institutional capacity-building.

Likewise, Ethiopia is devoting the utmost attention to the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. It should also be recalled that Ethiopia actively participated in the drafting of the Ottawa Convention; strongly supported resolution 58/33 of 2003; and has actively participated in all annual conferences, as well as Standing Committee meetings on anti-personnel landmines, since 2001.

As one of the 24 parties to the Ottawa Convention that are known to have a high number of mine victims and survivors, Ethiopia is undertaking concrete measures, on a sustainable basis, to assist in the rehabilitation of the latter through a national plan of action, for which greater and intensified international assistance is of critical importance and is being sought.

It needs to be re-emphasized that Ethiopia does not produce any kind of anti-personnel landmine, nor has it imported any since 1991, that is, after the downfall of the military dictatorship that ruled the country.

Ethiopia's National Parliament is actively processing the ratification of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. Ethiopia is also a State party to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC); the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC); the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the Partial-Test-Ban Treaty (PTBT); the 1925 Geneva Protocol and others, most of which it has already ratified.

Furthermore, Ethiopia is moving ahead to subscribe to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, in line with its principled position on the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The issues of disarmament and non-proliferation must be addressed in the light of the clear threats that terrorism poses to today's world. Having had experience in the fight against terrorism, Ethiopia knows well the evils of that scourge and believes in tackling it within a strong and unified international and regional framework of collaboration. Thus, in addition to embracing and practically implementing the various international instruments in this area, Ethiopia is also a party to the African Union Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. It has also forged strong alliances with various subregional, regional and international partners in the fight against terrorism and will continue to do so in future.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Ethiopia's commitment to promoting the broad agenda of disarmament and non-proliferation, both regionally and internationally, to ensure the effective maintenance of world peace and security. We remain confident that the Committee will be able to make some tangible headway through productive deliberations in the course of the current session.

Mr. Al-Maabri (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to express to you, Madam, on behalf of my delegation, our sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. I am confident that your well-known experience and skills will enable us to achieve a fruitful outcome. I should like to reiterate my delegation's full readiness to cooperate with you with a view to achieving tangible progress in all issues on our agenda during this session.

Nor can I fail to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau on their election. Our thanks go also to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for his important introductory statement and for the efforts he has been making to create momentum at the international level so as to put an end to the arms race and to promote the effectiveness of the disarmament machinery. It is our sincere hope that the Committee will achieve its lofty objectives. Indeed, this will be possible only if all delegations display flexibility and political will so as to overcome the sense of frustration that is casting a shadow over our work, due to the stalemate in the work of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

My Government, while supporting all sincere efforts aimed at the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, reiterates the right of all States to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes under international safeguards and the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The elimination of weapons of mass destruction, primarily nuclear weapons, continues to require urgent attention by the Committee in view of the clear link between that issue and the question of the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security — the very reason for the founding of the United Nations. It will indeed be possible to achieve that objective if this issue is addressed in a transparent manner and if the application of double standards is eschewed by the more influential countries in that field.

Consistent and balanced positions must be adopted concerning nuclear disarmament and arms control. In that regard, my Government has called for, and will continue to call for, making the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction. It is doing so in recognition of the importance of such a positive step in building confidence and in preventing an arms race among the States of the region. Such a race would only make the situation there more turbulent and dangerous, not only for the States of the region but also for the rest of the world, given the region's sensitive geographical location and the vital interests at stake for the world as a whole. That means that all parties to the talks must remain open to negotiations and to creating the necessary machinery for dialogue so as to arrive at appropriate solutions to the question of the Iranian nuclear issue.

The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East deserves the support and the attention of the international community, given its

positive effects on international peace and stability. While expressing the hope that this objective can be achieved, my Government expresses its concern at the insecurity prevailing in the region as a result of Israel's remaining outside the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It is therefore incumbent on Israel to accede forthwith to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to place all its nuclear facilities under a comprehensive supervision regime, in accordance with the safeguards agreement with the IAEA.

In the context of the negotiations on enhancing the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee, my Government reaffirms the importance of multilateralism in dealing with issues related to disarmament and the strengthening of the multilateral machinery for disarmament as well as clear confidence-building with a view to general and complete disarmament.

Finally, my delegation hopes that the Committee's deliberations and resolutions will contribute to the fulfilment of the aspirations of all peoples to peace, stability and security.

Ms. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to convey to you, Madam, my delegation's congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We wish you and the members of the Bureau every success in guiding the Committee's work. We are certain that, thanks to your experience and your wisdom, you will steer the Committee's work with skill and effectiveness.

In today's world, armament is increasing, despite the appeals made for disarmament. That is due to the failure of the negotiations held at previous conferences in previous years. It has not been possible to conclude agreements or to reach the objectives set in the course of the negotiations, which poses a threat to international peace and security. We therefore urge all parties to intensify their efforts to engage in multilateral negotiations on the basis of a consensus so as to prevent the proliferation of weapons and ensure that the goal of disarmament is reached.

The problem of weapons of mass destruction is one of the concerns of the international community as a whole, especially in the region of the Middle East. There are threats inherent in, and directly pertaining to, the proliferation and use of such weapons. Therefore, the countries of the region have been urged to make the Middle East, including the Gulf area, a nuclear-weapon-free zone that is also free of other weapons of mass destruction. Steps should be taken to adopt effective machinery to ensure the attainment of that objective under strict international monitoring.

In that context, we ask the international community and the major Powers to bring pressure to bear on Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Indeed, resolution 3472 B (XXX), adopted by the General Assembly on 11 December 1975, at its thirtieth session, states that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is one of the most effective ways to prevent the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Security Council, for its part, adopted resolution 487 (1981), which required Israel to place all of its nuclear installations under the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and to refrain from attacking or threatening to attack the nuclear facilities of other States.

Those resolutions and others are designed to make the Middle East a zone free from nuclear weapons, to ensure non-proliferation and general and complete disarmament, and to strengthen regional and international peace and security.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, whose goal is to ensure international cooperation in order to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction, has acceded to and ratified many agreements, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Kingdom will continue its efforts to reduce the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the context of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), under which Governments, including mine, commit themselves to report to the Security Council regarding nuclear weapons.

We support the efforts being made by the international community to find a peaceful solution through direct negotiations to the Iranian nuclear issue so as to prevent any further tension in the Arab Gulf region, and we urge Iran to cooperate with the IAEA and the parties concerned in that regard. We believe, however, in the safeguarding of the right of States to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, under the supervision of the IAEA.

It goes without saying that the reform efforts of the General Assembly and of its main committees should focus first on the implementation of resolutions without jeopardizing the primary objective of the United Nations, that is, the maintenance of international peace and security in all parts of the world. We must ensure the implementation of General Assembly resolutions on disarmament and of agreements and conventions aimed at creating an international environment conducive to peace, security, tolerance, tranquillity and stability.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): Madam Chairperson, at the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your election as well as the other members of the Bureau and to express my delegation's sincere confidence that, under your capable guidance and leadership, we will be able to achieve significant results in our work.

As we are discussing international security issues, I would like to use this opportunity to focus delegations' attention on the latest developments in my country, Georgia. Just recently, on 30 September 2006, the Russian Federation launched large-scale naval military exercises in the immediate vicinity of the territorial sea of Georgia that not only caused serious harm to the trade and economic interests of my country and endangered its marine environment, but also limited the regular operations and normal activities of the various governmental authorities of Georgia in the exercise of their sovereign rights.

Despite Georgia's objections and its request that such exercises cease immediately, unfortunately, just yesterday, these military naval manoeuvres were relocated to Georgia's territorial waters, only five nautical miles from my country's coastline, which clearly contravenes not only national legislation but also international practice and the universally recognized norms and principles of international law. We call upon the Russian side to leave Georgia's territorial waters immediately.

Once again I would like to highlight the importance of the problems that have already been raised in this forum a number of times during previous debates. Unfortunately, time and again, we have to reiterate that the problems I will raise are not yet resolved.

I would like to draw the Committee's attention in particular to issues related to protracted conflicts which pose a major threat to international peace, security and development — specifically those in two secessionist regions of Georgia: Abkhazia and the former autonomous region of South Ossetia, where an unprecedented and aggressive process of militarization is under way. It is clear to everyone, bearing in mind the very limited resources at the disposal of separatists, who is providing expertise, weapons and ammunitions to secessionists for those activities.

A large-scale military exercise was held in Abkhazia recently, from 24 to 26 September. That event offered a display of military detachments as well as several armoured vehicles. Ironically, we were able to follow the entire process of those military exercises on a daily basis on Russian television channels.

Most alarmingly, those exercises were held under the very eyes of the peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States, carried out entirely by the Russian military forces, which did nothing to prevent these actions. This is not, by the way, the first time that this has happened.

As a result of this process, a substantial amount of arms and ammunition which are beyond the control of the State and consequently are not reflected in the records of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms have accumulated in those lawless territories. My delegation would like to underline once again that the process of the uncontrolled spread of armaments in the lawless territories represents a major threat to the stability of the entire region.

Another issue of concern to us is the illegitimate presence of a Russian military base in Gudauta, in the breakaway region of Abkhazia. That military base was to be withdrawn as long ago as 2001. The Russian side has stated several times that the base had already been disbanded. Despite the numerous requests made by Georgia, full-scale monitoring by the international independent monitoring team has not yet been carried out. The reason given by the Russian side for its refusal is the lack of a secure environment in the area, which, as we all are aware, is under the control of the secessionist regime.

Accordingly, we consider that, until the international monitoring group is allowed to verify the situation on the ground, the Russian side has not fulfilled its commitment with regard to the Gudauta base.

Regrettably, these situations, as well as similar ongoing developments in the conflict zones on the

territory of Georgia, are beyond national and international disarmament and non-proliferation control mechanisms. Georgia fully shares the common concern that the problem of the uncontrolled accumulation and spread of arms poses a real threat to human security and peace, and hinders the peacebuilding process. Accordingly, we call upon all Member States to take note of the fact that these are problems that the international community should handle.

Before concluding, I wish to assure you, Madam Chairperson, of the Georgian delegation's full readiness to cooperate with you in your efforts to achieve the objectives and goals of this important body.

Mr. Adjagba (Togo) (*spoke in French*): First and foremost, I should like to congratulate you, Madam, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and for the outstanding manner in which you have been guiding our work. I should like also to convey to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, our most sincere thanks for the introductory statement he made to the Committee at the beginning of the general debate.

While aligning itself with the statements made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of Africa and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Togolese delegation would like to emphasize the fact that it shares the concern expressed by the Under-Secretary-General with regard to the low level of interest shown in crucial disarmament issues and non-proliferation questions during the general debate of the General Assembly at its current session. However, as all are aware, these issues represent some of the most serious challenges facing our world today.

Indeed, in his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General emphasized, quite rightly, the lack of progress achieved recently with regard to the adoption by the international community of a common position on issues pertaining to non-proliferation and disarmament. In the view of the Secretary-General, it is a matter of concern to note that the international community continues to vacillate between a resolute stance whereby members of the community would resolutely commit themselves to controlling the proliferation of arms, taking the path of negotiation, and the more dangerous position whereby weapons of mass destruction themselves become the currency of negotiations and international relations.

In that regard, Togo has consistently advocated the principle of general and complete disarmament under international control. Thus, in his statement during the general debate, the head of the Togolese delegation, expressed, at the current session of the General Assembly, his regret that the efforts under way by the community of nations have not led to concrete results.

By way of illustration, let me say that in 2005 the international community did not reach any agreement to strengthen the foundations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), just as the Summit of September 2005 was unable to adopt a common position on non-proliferation and disarmament.

Furthermore, the events we are witnessing, especially on the Korean peninsula, pose a serious threat to international peace and security. Similarly, the threat of non-State actors' obtaining weapons of mass destruction in order to carry out terrorist attacks with catastrophic consequences, has not been eliminated. In addition, when we consider the astronomical sums that some countries are spending on the arms race, when we have every reason to believe that our world will not manage to reduce poverty by half by 2015 for lack of funding, it becomes clear that we should do our utmost to break the deadlock in international negotiations and once again make disarmament the focus of the international community's priorities.

During the general debate, the head of the Togolese delegation also emphasized the need for the General Assembly to devote particular attention to the issue of the proliferation of small arms. Taking into the account the ravages caused by such weapons in certain parts of the world, especially in Africa, we can only deplore the inability shown in July 2006 by the United Nations Conference to reach an agreement in the context of the Conference to Review the Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

However, the efforts made at the regional level deserve the support of the international community. That applies to the adoption in June 2006 by the States of the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) of the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials.

With regard to the combat against the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, we believe that the Regional Disarmament Centres have a crucial role to play. To that end, the Togolese delegation would like to refer to the serious situation being experienced b the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. As the Secretary-General rightly emphasized in his report contained in document A/61/137, that institution is facing chronic financing difficulties with regard to the consultative mechanism established by the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 60/86 and has not been able to find an adequate solution.

Furthermore, the lack of human resources available to the Regional Centre means that it has not been able to plan or carry out programmes that might benefit from voluntary contributions on the part of countries or donor organizations.

Togo, for its part, will continue to lend its support to the Regional Centre.

Togo would like to thank those countries that have recently made contributions to the Regional Centre and urges them to continue to provide financial support to the institution, which, in the current context, should play a primary role in Africa in the areas of disarmament, confidence-building and peacebuilding.

The Togolese delegation expresses the hope that the interactive meeting on the Regional Centres, to take place on 17 October, will allow us to achieve new guidelines for strengthening and revitalizing the Regional Centres in Africa, Latin American and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): We wish to congratulate you most warmly, Madam, and take this opportunity also to express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, for the very informative statement he made at the beginning of this general debate. My delegation agrees with his analysis while associating itself with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia and of Nigeria, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the African Group, respectively.

For centuries now, humanity has dreamed of building an unarmed peace, maintained through confidence and harmony among nations. In the twelfth century, the crossbow was considered a terrifying weapon, and the concerns of humankind focused on the control of its use. In 1139 that issue was the subject of an international conference convened by Pope Innocent II. However, the technological process achieved since then have multiplied our concerns with regard to the capacity for harm of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and in particular with regard to the illicit trade in conventional weapons, especially small arms and light weapons. Their harmful consequences, which have certain and real repercussions for international peace and security, are equal only to those of weapons of mass destruction.

During the sixtieth session, we made considerable efforts to promote disarmament in all categories of weapons. However, the results obtained were below the expectations of our peoples. Despite the adoption of a political declaration on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons, the disarmament machinery remained at a standstill, despite the initiatives taken at various levels to relaunch it.

The various aspects of this paralysis were described in detail by those speakers that have addressed this issue since the opening of the sixty-first session. My delegation believes that the current situation in the disarmament field is due to a lack of genuine political will among Member States to begin a sincere dialogue and to pave the way for effective negotiations in the areas deemed priority issues so as to reduce the threats to humankind.

Given that situation, Benin urges all nuclear-weapon States and other weapons of mass destruction to show greater sensitivity to the aspirations of humankind to live in a world free of the threat of annihilation resulting from the accumulation of such arms in the world.

It is necessary to abide strictly by existing disarmament agreements. With that in mind, more sustained attention should be devoted to strengthening international cooperation for the effective elimination of arms stockpiles that are the subject of bilateral or multilateral disarmament agreements. That should take place with strict respect for the norms governing safety and environmental protection. That would contribute greatly to preventing the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists.

At the same time, it is important to negotiate and conclude new verifiable, non-discriminatory and

irreversible disarmament agreements, so as to move humankind away from the edge of the nuclear abyss.

Benin unreservedly rejects all attempts at the modernization of weapons of mass destruction and the trivialization of atomic weapons, as well as new geo-strategic doctrines that allow the use of such weapons in the battlefield. Currently, as suspicion grows between nuclear-weapon States and those that see in the acquisition of such weapons a guarantee of their security, the fight against the proliferation of nuclear weapons cannot be effective and efficient in the absence of legally binding negative security assurances and as long as vertical proliferation is not combated with equal vigour as is horizontal proliferation, as both are equally pernicious.

Aside from all other considerations, expanding consensus on the principle of the prohibition of the production of fissile material for the manufacturing of new nuclear weapons is an urgent task for the United Nations. The disarmament machinery should focus on this fully. In that respect, it is important that the working groups of the Disarmament Commission be mandated to hold informal consultations on issues under their purview in between the formal sessions of the Commission.

On the other hand, non-nuclear-weapon States must show commitment and respect for their obligations derived from the letter and the spirit of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Irreversibly renouncing the acquisition of nuclear weapons should go hand in hand with engaging in unreserved cooperation in the area of promoting the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in other words, for development.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones can greatly contribute to strengthening peace and security at the regional level if it is the result of inclusive negotiations and if the zones thus created enjoy the effective recognition of nuclear-weapon States.

In the area of conventional weapons, the eradication of the illicit trade in such arms remains the focus of our concerns. Following the failure of the Conference on the 2001 Programme of Action, the countries victims of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons are now turning to the First Committee, in the hope that it will serve as a framework to adopt a follow-up mechanism which will allow for the multilateral monitoring of the implementation of the Programme of Action and a periodic evaluation by the United Nations of the progress made and the difficulties encountered in that respect.

It is important, therefore, that the biennial periodicity of the assessment be retained, as well as the principle of holding a five-year review conference. It is urgent to find appropriate solutions with a view to the effective implementation of the Programme of Action and to ensure that the developing countries which are affected by the proliferation of light weapons receive the necessary assistance to help them combat this scourge. It is important that the working group on illicit brokering start its activities soon.

Benin supports the initiatives taken by certain countries to launch a process of intergovernmental consultations to elaborate an internationally binding instrument on the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons. Such an instrument must, we believe, prohibit the transfer of such arms to non-State actors if they are not duly authorized by Government of those States of which they are nationals. It must also establish non-discriminatory standards that will preserve the right to self-defence of all States.

From that perspective, the new Convention that has just been adopted by the member States of the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) constitutes a reference point to be taken into consideration, particularly when it comes to establishing the principle of the increased responsibility of producer countries.

Benin pays tribute here to the European Union, which has decided, within the framework of promoting the inclusion of developing countries in international trade, to adopt the "Everything but arms" initiative. That initiative allows for the free trade of goods between African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and the European Economic Community, with the exception of weapons. We believe that that concept should prevail in relations between the North and the South.

We must give it greater substance and a stronger spirit, and it must be non-selective. That concept must be applied. That is why there is astonishment at the ease with which the countries of the South acquire weapons through a trade that certain developed countries conduct freely while, on the other hand,

doing nothing to fulfil international commitments with regard to official development assistance.

My country believes that there is an intrinsic link between development and disarmament. So long as we progress along the path of disarmament, we will be able to obtain sufficient resources to finance development. The international community must mobilize to prevent the channelling of the wealth generated by humankind into research on and the creation of new weapons of mass destruction and fine-tuning those that already exist, at a time when the world is concerned with seeking new sources of financing for the mobilization of additional resources for development, as we agreed in the Monterrey Consensus. It is not an illusion to believe that the substantial savings that could be made by means of an effective reduction in military expenditures would allow for a more effective struggle against poverty and the translation into reality of the Millennium Development Goals, in order to give poor countries, and in particular the least developed countries, the possibility of building a decent existence that would be a bulwark of peace and security in a world where tension would be replaced by harmony and where well-being and prosperity would be more equitably enjoyed.

Mr. Polurez (Ukraine): I should like to start, Madam, by extending to you my warmest congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee and wishing you every success in this endeavour. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

The delegation of Ukraine fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. I would like to take this opportunity to address some additional issues which are of considerable importance for Ukraine.

It goes without saying that in today's global security environment, the strengthening of international instruments and regimes aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and a broad range of arms control issues remain a top priority for the world community. The inability to agree on set of commitments in this area that we witnessed recently could seriously undermine collective efforts to promote peace and security, thereby weakening the capacity of every State to address current threats and challenges.

A broad and comprehensive concept is needed to counter effectively the risks which may arise from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, the European Security Strategy, which promotes the universalization and reinforcement of multilateral agreements related to weapons of mass destruction, export control regimes and the criminalization of prohibited activities, as well as the enhancement of the relevant physical protection provisions, constitutes a good basis for consolidating our efforts and translating our aspirations into concrete actions.

We all must restate our commitments to multilateralism as a core principle in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, with a view to shoring up and enhancing the efficiency of the relevant international agreements, in particular the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) and the Chemicals Weapons Convention (CWC); and to reinforcing the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in sustaining an environment where the peaceful use of nuclear energy can be secured.

However, while the right of every nation to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes must be safeguarded, full adherence to commitments undertaken in the field of non-proliferation are required. I would like to stress the fact that the universal adoption and proper implementation of the strengthened safeguards system is a prerequisite for an effective and credible nuclear non-proliferation regime. On its part, my country ratified the Protocol Additional to the IAEA safeguards in November 2005.

Ukraine has repeatedly stated that the NPT is the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. Ukraine, which shares the general disappointment over the 2005 NPT Review Conference outcome, is nevertheless determined to contribute actively to the next Treaty review cycle in order to achieve tangible results in all three areas of the NPT.

We find encouraging this year's focused debates on the issue of a fissile material cut-off treaty in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, where no objection was raised to the principle of treaty negotiation. The commencement of that process and the conclusion of a non-discriminatory, universally applicable treaty prohibiting the production of fissile

material for nuclear weapons not only will break the longstanding impasse in the Conference on Disarmament but also contribute significantly to combating nuclear proliferation in practice.

I would also like to reiterate the vital importance of the universalization of the CTBT. We call upon all States, particularly those listed in annex II of the Treaty, to accede to the CTBT without delay and unconditionally. Pending the Treaty's entry into force, Ukraine — which currently holds the chairmanship of the CTBT Preparatory Commission — calls on all States to refrain from any action not in keeping with the Treaty.

Notwithstanding the inability of States parties to agree on an outcome document at this year's Review Conference on the Programme of Action, the illicit trade in and uncontrolled accumulation of small arms and light weapons remain among the greatest impediments to sustainable development, conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding. Ukraine is a devoted advocate of efforts within the United Nations system and at the regional level to address the issue of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. As a firm supporter of practical steps at the national level to ensure effective implementation of the Programme of Action and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Ukraine attaches particular importance to the destruction of excessive stockpiles of those kinds of weapon and related ammunition.

With regard to the issue of regulating the global trade in conventional arms, Ukraine supports the initiative on the international arms trade treaty, which could become a comprehensive instrument for establishing common standards in this field, thus preventing the proliferation of conventional arms.

The issue of decommissioned conventional ammunition in Ukraine remains a grave problem that is causing serious humanitarian, development, ecological and economic concerns. The explosions which took place in August 2006 at the Novobohdanivka ammunition depot were but added proof of the need to take steps towards the practical resolution of the problem without delay.

The Soviet legacy of millions of tonnes of conventional ammunition in Ukraine poses a direct threat to the health of peoples and to security and the environment. The problem can be resolved effectively only through the consolidation of international efforts aimed at preventing decommissioned conventional ammunition from threatening the lives of millions of people.

It is my pleasure to inform delegations that, on 1 June 2006, Ukraine became a fully fledged party to the Ottawa Convention. Fruitful cooperation with the European Commission on the destruction of stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines ensured the ratification of the Convention by the Ukrainian parliament last year. Ukraine has taken on its new obligation with a strong sense of responsibility and remains open to constructive cooperation so as to ensure the timely implementation of all of the Convention's crucial provisions.

As a State party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) as well as its amendment and all its protocols, Ukraine is fully committed to comprehensive compliance with those instruments. In the light of the upcoming Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, to be held in November 2006, Ukraine agrees that there is a need to reinforce the effectiveness of the CCW as an essential tool aimed at reducing the negative consequences of both conventional warfare operations and their aftermath.

Ukraine, which is among those States which initially adhered to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, welcomed the entry into force of that important instrument on 12 November 2006. The universalization of the Protocol will contribute to the strengthening of international humanitarian law as well as to consolidating efforts to address the negative impacts of explosive remnants of war.

To conclude, I would like to underline the urgency of consolidating international efforts so as to achieve progress in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, in the United Nations and in other forums, for the sake of future generations.

Mr. Okio (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Madam Chairperson, I should like, on behalf of the Congo, to congratulate you warmly on your well-deserved election, as well as the other members of the Bureau. My delegation wishes also to thank the Secretariat for the technical support given us.

It is no doubt an advantage to take the floor on the last day of the general debate of the First

Committee, after hearing a large number of statements, some of them made by eminent persons. This year, we learned that our concerns are even greater given the setbacks in the area of disarmament and in the implementation of the numerous resolutions adopted year after year.

Following the disappointing outcome of the May 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and of the September 2005 World Summit, at which Member States were unable to arrive at a common position on non-proliferation and disarmament, we were surprised, in July 2006, by the failure of the Conference to Review the Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

As military expenditures continue to rise, countries are deeply divided on the issue of disarmament, which is giving rise to great concern on the part of the international community. Indeed, there is a threat looming over humankind.

However, the international community seems to be distancing itself from the significant progress made in the 1990s, and especially that made in 2000 at the Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, where encouraging commitments were made with a view to the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty, as the Secretary-General so aptly put it in his report on the work of the Organization (A/60/1).

Non-respect of those commitments could intensify the much-feared phenomenon of proliferation, both horizontally and vertically. That would not send a clear and firm message to terrorists. Only a responsible, non-selective approach to the implementation of the NPT can in the long term lead to universal acceptance of the Treaty, which remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, the foundation of nuclear disarmament, and the framework for the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Ten years after the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) signing ceremony on 10 September 1996 in New York, the Treaty has not yet entered into force, despite the fact that the international situation requires that the process be accelerated and that the moratorium on nuclear tests be maintained until the Treaty has entered into force. We therefore urge those States that have not yet done so to sign or ratify the Treaty. It is important that we redouble our efforts with a view to achieving our goals.

The failure of the Conference to Review the Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is of particular importance for the Congo, given its location on a continent that has suffered all too much from the devastating effects of small arms and light weapons. The Congo therefore calls on all States present to commit themselves once again with determination and in a spirit of solidarity to overcoming the difficulties ahead and to devote the required attention to combating and eliminating that scourge. On our continent, such arms are truly weapons of mass destruction, as is daily evident.

Congo also renews its commitment with a view to achieving the universalization of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.

With regard to these questions and others before us, we would reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism. By working together, we can spare our world the consequences of current and future threats. It is the responsibility of us all to history and to future generations to promote and to strengthen the various multilateral instruments in order to reduce the threat that weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons pose for humankind.

In 2006 the United Nations showed clearly that the maintenance of peace was the focus of its concerns. Peacekeeping operations were strengthened, and in some cases, peacekeeping became peacebuilding — in Burundi and in Sierra Leone, among others countries. That transformation was qualitative as well as quantitative. That allowed for positive developments in Haiti, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, recent experience in Timor-Leste — a friendly country — where there was a resurgence of violence a year after the departure of the Blue Helmets in May 2005, is a reminder that we must provide countries in such fragile situations with comprehensive, possible long-term support. We are certain that the Peacebuilding Commission, which is being set up in a proactive and systematic manner, will play a useful role in coordinating reconstruction efforts for countries in post-conflict situations.

Issues of peace and security lie at the heart of the Congo's regional and subregional policies, in keeping with General Assembly resolutions on confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels, the most recent of which is resolution 60/64 of 8 December 2005. That is the basis for Congo's active participation in the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Congo reiterates the importance of that Committee for our region, some of whose States are gradually emerging from protracted internal conflicts, where efforts must be made to promote a climate of peace and security. The Committee, as the representative of Cameroon has noted, has contributed a great deal to our region since its establishment. In order to discharge its mandate, the Committee needs resources. We therefore renew our call for voluntary contributions to the Committee's Trust Fund aimed at financing its extrabudgetary activities.

Finally, we hope that the decision taken at the Committee's twenty-fourth ministerial meeting, held at Kigali from 25 to 29 September 2006, on the convening in 2007 of a subregional conference in 2007 to address transborder security issues will receive the necessary support from donors and various partners.

It is only through dialogue and cooperation that we will be able to face the threats of the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery. Congo hopes that the work of our Committee will allow us to find new ways of promoting consensus on the issues before us.

Mr. Pak Gil Yon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Madam Chairperson, at the outset, allow me to warmly congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee and to wish you every success.

The hopes of peoples for a nuclear-free world following the end of the cold war have been dashed, and the danger of a nuclear war is increasing with each passing day. The dependence of the nuclear Powers on nuclear weapons, far from decreasing, is on the rise.

Recently, sessions of the Disarmament Commission and of other multinational forums for disarmament failed to reach a consensus on disarmament issues, including nuclear disarmament, and are now deadlocked. That is attributable mainly to the policy of nuclear domination pursued by some countries based on their selfish interests and their desire for world hegemony.

Nuclear weapons are used openly by the super-Power as a means of threatening and blackmailing sovereign States and undermining their sovereignty and security. It is a reality that, unless we put an end to attempts to dominate through nuclear weapons and the threat thereof, no progress can be expected in discussing disarmament issues as a whole, to say nothing of nuclear disarmament in particular.

For the sake of world peace and security, nuclear disarmament should be put into practice as a priority, and all nuclear weapons should be eliminated from the globe.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are inseparably related, but the principal objective is nuclear disarmament. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is the result of the threat posed by existing nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, however, some countries differentiate between the existence of nuclear weapons and their proliferation and persist with their assertions on the issue of non-proliferation alone.

This, in fact, shows that their real intention is to evade nuclear-weapon disarmament. Non-proliferation without nuclear disarmament makes no sense. The international order will undergo a noticeable and substantial change if the gangster-like logic that only big countries can possess nuclear weapons and attack and threaten small countries with them continues to be allowed and tolerated. Moreover, this will inevitably result in compelling non-nuclear States to possess a nuclear deterrent force.

Today, such high-handed policies on nuclear weapons, which are based on a double standard, have reduced the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and other disarmament conventions to dead letters that are of no use and that lack binding force — a sure way of plunging the world into a nuclear arms race.

There can be no justification for the fact that certain countries take issue with the peaceful nuclear activities of countries they detest, while evading their obligations to disarm their own nuclear weapons. The peaceful use of nuclear energy is not a privilege conceded to specific countries but the legitimate right of sovereign States. Today many countries opt for

building strong defence capabilities for the purpose of self-defence. That is because all arms control treaties, including the NPT, fail to protect the security of non-nuclear States.

All nuclear Powers should give up their nuclear doctrines based on the pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons and commit themselves unconditionally to the non-use of nuclear weapons pre-emptively, as demanded by the non-nuclear-weapon States. They must come to the negotiation table to draft an international convention in that respect.

The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, which has become a focus for the international community, is the outcome of a nuclear-threat policy based on the United States' hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, pursued for over half a century. The United States threatens the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with its nuclear weapons and has designated it as a target for pre-emptive attack, compelling it to possess a nuclear deterrence force as a self-defence measure.

History and present realities have shown us that only when a country has a powerful force can it defend its national dignity, sovereignty and independence.

It is a reality today that, be it a missile launch or a nuclear test, as long as it is approved by the United States, it is tolerated and will not be brought before the United Nations.

In that regard, my delegation wishes to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that during the general debate some countries disregarded the substance of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. Those countries urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon its nuclear programme, neglecting to consider the root causes of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. They sought only to flatter the United States by supporting that country's hostile policy toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, rather than promoting a genuine and fair resolution of the nuclear issue.

The logic in vogue nowadays is that the United States' threat of a pre-emptive nuclear strike against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is in the interest of peace and security, while the countermeasures taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea represent threats to peace and security, which does not go down well with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or others who cherish justice.

In today's world, where the law of the jungle prevails, the only ones that can champion justice are the strong. Today, thanks to the Songun policy of defending socialism and peace with an army, we have to date been able to safeguard our sovereignty and prevent a war on the Korean peninsula, despite the persistent political, military and economic efforts of hostile forces to stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is our ultimate goal. We remain unchanged in our will to realize such denuclearization through dialogue and negotiation, as we undertook in the September 19 Joint Statement.

However, no sooner had the Joint Statement been made public than the United States applied economic sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and stepped up its pressure from every angle. In addition, the United States has stood in the way of the implementation of the Joint Statement, using all means available, including threats, blackmail and a large-scale military exercise targeted at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to make efforts to counter the threat posed by outside forces and to ensure lasting peace on the Korean peninsula in future as well.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Madam Chairperson, allow me to join in the congratulations expressed to you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I would like to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of the full support of the delegation of Uzbekistan in your efforts to effectively and fruitfully carry out the work of the Committee.

During the current session of the General Assembly, the majority of Member States have once again reaffirmed the importance of collective efforts in ensuring international peace and security. That understanding is essential in circumstances in which the international community is facing a growing number of threats and challenges in the area of security, disarmament and non-proliferation.

In our view, the lack of progress in recent years in multilateral talks does not mean that all possibilities

have been lost for the adoption by States of urgent and effective measures to prevent the erosion of the international regime to monitor and prohibit weapons of mass destruction. We recognize that the continued development of the Central Asian region at this decisive stage will depend to a significant extent on a correct understanding of the nature of existing threats and the timely identification of their sources and interrelationships.

The primary threat to the region is that of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The signing in Semipalatinsk on 8 September last of a treaty making Central Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone is proof that, on the basis of the experience already gained by the international community and of previous legal documents, States can together ensure security, stability and peace in the region and create the necessary conditions for the development and prosperity of their peoples.

Nine years ago, the States of Central Asia — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — took a decision based on their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to create a new system of security, taking into consideration the special characteristics of the region — a system that would be the first regional security mechanism in Central Asia.

By their example, the States of the region are endeavouring to reaffirm the fact that nuclear-weapon-free zone, as part and parcel of this regime, significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security at the regional and global levels.

Recent events in the area of nuclear non-proliferation bear witness to the timeliness and relevance of the idea of creating a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, which was voiced 13 years ago, here at the United Nations during the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, by the President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Karimov.

May I express our most sincere gratitude to all Member States, international Organizations and non-governmental organizations that warmly congratulated the Central Asian States on the creation of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone.

I should like to note the considerable support provided in that respect by the United Nations and by the Secretary-General personally. The Department for Disarmament Affairs and the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific and the Office of Legal Affairs throughout the entire process of the creation of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Such cooperation has helped to achieve a breakthrough in the deadlock situation of the non-proliferation regime.

Against that backdrop, it is somewhat surprising that the legal framework of the treaty was not reflected in the most recent general statement issued by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which was directly involved in all of the work on that treaty.

We believe that the following factors should underlie any consensus in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

First, any efforts in this field should be undertaken solely on a multilateral basis, taking into account the views of the majority of Member States. The system for the evaluation of threats and challenges should be a unified one.

Secondly, the point of departure for any further multilateral negotiations should be compliance by States with their already existing obligations within the framework of international treaties on disarmament issues.

Thirdly, there is a need further to strengthen multilateral measures designed to combat the black market in nuclear materials and technology and the threat posed by the increasing activities of terrorist groups and their attempts to obtain components of weapons of mass destruction.

In that connection, we welcome the global initiative proposed by Russia and the United States to combat acts of nuclear terrorism, and we support the strengthening of the regime established by Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

Fourthly, the role of non-nuclear States in international relations must be amplified. We must create a system of universal and unconditional guarantees for the security of non-nuclear States.

I am certain that all conditions are present for the successful conclusion of the work of the Committee. The delegation of Uzbekistan would like to express its

full readiness to cooperate with all delegations and Member States in achieving that task.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Madam Chairperson, at the outset, I should like to seize this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of this body. I am confident that your diplomatic skills are an important asset that will allow the Committee to achieve a positive outcome this year. I would like also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election.

I would like to associate my delegation with the statement delivered in this Committee by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, which has been a victim of weapons of mass destruction, has bitter experience of extensive chemical attacks against its military and its civilian population, which resulted in a large number of casualties. Since the end of the war imposed on Iran by the regime of Saddam Hussein, which was supported by certain Western countries, we have been, and still are, witnessing the daily sufferings of the thousands of chemical-weapons victims throughout our country. With such a sad and harsh experience in its past, Iran is highly motivated to pursue the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and regards them as inhumane and dangerous tools detrimental to all human communities. As a matter of principle, Iran will spare no effort to achieve the lofty goal of comprehensive disarmament in the field of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear disarmament.

We welcome the establishment — in our immediate neighbourhood — of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone located entirely in the northern hemisphere, namely the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone. My delegation congratulates the five Central Asian States — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — that signed the treaty creating a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in the region. That treaty, which forbids third countries from transporting nuclear weapons through or storing materials on the territory of Central Asia, is an important step towards a world free from nuclear weapons. Indeed, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is a major step towards nuclear disarmament.

Notwithstanding this significant event, regrettably, 30 years after the adoption of the General Assembly resolution, initially proposed by Iran, on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, no progress has been achieved towards its realization because of the intransigent policy of Israel. It is worth mentioning that the only existing obstacle to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is the non-adherence of that regime to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its continued clandestine operation of unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, with the help and technological assistance of the United States. That regime has paid no attention to the continuing international call made in different forums, particularly at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, at which 187 countries called on that regime by name to accede to the NPT immediately and unconditionally.

Moreover, that regime has never been a party to the other international instruments on weapons of mass destruction, namely the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, due to its biological and chemical weapons programmes. Ironically — and this is indeed ridiculous — the Israeli regime, a non-member of the NPT, whose nuclear arsenal, coupled with its expansionist and State terrorism policies, which is repeatedly recognized as the single most serious threat to regional peace and security, cries wolf about Iran's peaceful nuclear programme and has launched a campaign of threats, lies, deception and blackmail against Iran. Those who are misled and manipulated by that campaign are in fact serving the interests of the Israeli regime.

The threat posed by the accumulation of an estimated 27,000 nuclear weapons in nuclear-weapon States remains a grave worldwide concern. The lack of progress towards nuclear disarmament and the failure of certain nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligations regarding the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, as well as their new military doctrines based on the threat of use of nuclear weapons, continue to pose a threat to the international community.

We should not lose sight of the fact that the only country that has ever used nuclear weapons during a conflict, namely the United States, still maintains a sizeable arsenal of thousands of nuclear warheads, of which many are operational and the remainder are in reserve or stockpiled. Many of those warheads are

deployed on land-based missile systems, on bombers and on submarines. Hundreds of tactical nuclear weapons, which consist of Tomahawk land attack cruise missiles and B-61 bombs, are ready to use. The United States has deployed nuclear weapons at bases in several European NATO countries, in clear violation of the provisions of the NPT. Moreover, it continues to engage in the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons by pursuing vigorously the development of new types of mini-, easy-to-use nuclear weapons and building new facilities for the production of fissile material for new nuclear weapons. Just one example — according to the United States National Nuclear Security Administration, the United States will be able to make plutonium pits for as many as 30 to 40 new warheads per year after 2010, in Los Alamos.

The United States is also proliferating nuclear weapons horizontally by transferring technology and materials to non-members of the NPT whose unsafeguarded nuclear facilities are aimed at the production and development of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, no progress has been made in assuring the non-nuclear weapon States parties to the NPT against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons through a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument. All of those developments have put in jeopardy the future of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The international community should vigorously pursue the nuclear disarmament obligations agreed at the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences, particularly at the upcoming meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, as decided by General Assembly resolution 60/72 of 8 December 2005.

In that context, we are of the view that all nuclear disarmament obligations, in particular the 13 practical steps, are part of an integrated whole and should be implemented in full. Therefore, a piecemeal approach such as that proposed for the fissile material cutoff treaty falls short of addressing the issue at hand.

On the issue of missiles, my delegation wishes to express its gratitude for the new report of the Secretary-General which was prepared with the assistance of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the Department for Disarmament Affairs and submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to resolution 59/67. That report is duly reflected in this year's resolution on "Missiles", sponsored by Egypt, Indonesia and Iran. It will be a valuable contribution to the third Panel of Governmental Experts, which will hold its first session from 11 to 15 June 2007. We expect that the Panel will succeed in fulfilling its mandate by identifying areas where consensus can be reached on the issue of missiles in all its aspects.

With respect to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Sixth Review Conference, which will take place later this year, is an important event in the follow-up of developments relating to the Convention. In that context, my delegation would like to remind the States parties to the BWC that the Islamic Republic of Iran has formally renewed its proposal for the amendment of the Convention on the prohibition of the use of biological weapons and expects that this issue will be discussed thoroughly.

Before concluding, I would like to touch on the important issue of the inalienable right of the States parties to the NPT to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. That inalienable right originates from two broader propositions. First, scientific and technological achievements are the common heritage of humanity. Nuclear technology has broad applications ranging from medicine and agriculture to the provision of a renewable source of energy. No nation can monopolize any scientific or technological achievement, including nuclear technology. The few countries that already have access to all kinds of nuclear technologies cannot create new categories of "haves" and "have-nots" by pursuing a kind of nuclear technology apartheid policy.

Secondly, the NPT and all other international instruments are based on a general proposition that sets out the requisite balance between rights and obligations. That balance guarantees the longevity of the legal regime by providing incentives for membership and compliance. The provisions of the NPT and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Statute on the right to nuclear technology, as well as the imperative of cooperation and sharing of the technology among those who have accepted the obligations of non-proliferation, testify to the wisdom and understanding of their drafters.

However, in practice, we must guard against any further entrenchment of the impression that membership in the NPT and the IAEA safeguards regime constitutes an impediment to the peaceful use

of nuclear energy, while non-membership is rewarded by acquiescence, as in the case of the development of one of the largest stockpiles of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. If anything, its failure to accept NPT and safeguards obligations should have made the only outsider to the NPT in the region the subject of the most severe restrictions, not provided it with impunity.

Like all other members of the NPT, Iran considers the pursuit and development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes to be its inalienable right, and it has therefore invested extensive human and material resources in that field. At the same time, as we have repeatedly stated, nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction have no place in Iran's defence doctrine. We categorically reject the misleading and unsubstantiated allegations made by the United States about Iran's peaceful nuclear programme. All reports issued by the IAEA since November 2003 have been indicative of the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme, and the Agency has repeatedly reaffirmed that it "has not seen indications of diversion of nuclear material to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices".

In that context, my delegation would like to express its greatest appreciation to the 118 countries of the Non-Aligned Movement for their support and for the statement issued by their Heads of State and Government in Havana last month. The Movement's Heads of State and Government expressed their conviction that

> "the only way to resolve the issue is to resume negotiations without any preconditions and to enhance cooperation with the involvement of all necessary parties".

We have already demonstrated our readiness to restart talks, without any preconditions, by responding to the proposed package by the group of six countries, with goodwill and the intention of achieving a reasonable breakthrough, and we have tried to lay the groundwork for resolving Iran's nuclear issue by taking the constructive path of negotiation.

Ms. Majali (Jordan): Let me start, Madam, by congratulating you on your election as Chairperson of the Committee and by also congratulating the other members of the Bureau on their election. I wish to assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation. At the same time, I would also like to extend my delegation's sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Oh Joon of the Republic of Korea, for having successfully conducted our work during the sixtieth session. My delegation also takes this opportunity to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Tanaka, as well as the rest of his team at the Department for Disarmament Affairs for their ongoing efforts. At this juncture, my delegation also associates itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

It is unfortunate that yet another opportunity was missed this year with the failure of the 2006 Conference to Review the Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to agree on a final follow-up document, reminding us once again of other recent disappointments, namely the failure of the 2005 seventh Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and the inability to agree on the inclusion of any reference to disarmament and non-proliferation in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document.

Yet despite the repeated disappointments and the continued non-compliance with, and non-entry into force of, key multilaterally negotiated disarmament treaties, we must not, as the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs rightly pointed out, let such events blind us to the achievements made to date, and, may I also add, those that it is still possible to make.

Given the difficulties we have been facing, my delegation believes that the First Committee provides us with a vital forum to pursue our deliberations on how best to address challenges and concerns in the area of international peace and security with regard to disarmament, non-proliferation and the threat posed both by weapons of mass destruction and by conventional arms, as we seek to find better ways to overcome the current impasse in much of our collective efforts and as we move ahead in discharging our mandated tasks.

In that context, the participation in our interactive debate of officials from the various institutions that constitute the United Nations disarmament machinery, as well as of established groups of governmental experts and non-governmental organizations, will provide a valuable impetus to our discussions.

This year it is encouraging to note that, although the Conference of Disarmament has once again failed to adopt a substantive report in agreeing on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, it has nevertheless been able to conduct a focused and structured debate. We hope that similar positive developments will lead to agreement on a programme of work and to the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cutoff treaty. The conclusion of a universal, unconditional and binding instrument that would provide comprehensive security guarantees to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT also remains important.

Similarly, the Commission on Disarmament was able to agree last year on substantive agenda items, allowing it to resume a substantive session after three years of deadlock. Although it was not able to agree on a substantive report for its first session, it is hoped that future meetings will pave the way towards an agreement on recommendations on both agenda items currently under discussion.

The 2006 Conference to Review the Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects did not, unfortunately, succeed, but it did represent an opportunity to reiterate our commitment to the Programme. The regrettable inability to agree on an outcome document or follow-up measures should not overshadow the fact that the Programme of Action still provides the necessary framework for our collective response at the national, regional and global levels.

That is important to note, as the numerous threats posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons have devastating consequences and remain a matter of concern to all countries and regions. Since no State alone can address their risks and ramifications, they require a collective and concerted response. My delegation believes that the newly established Group of Governmental Experts on brokering will further our efforts in combating the illicit trade in these weapons.

While we should be pleased with the steady progress in the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, my delegation believes that there remains a need for the international community to mobilize resources and to provide the necessary assistance to landmine-clearance operations as well as for the rehabilitation of victims, including their social and economic reintegration in landmine-affected countries, so as to enable Member States to live up to their obligations under the Convention. The eighth Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, to be held in 2007 and which my country is looking forward to hosting, will therefore be instrumental in further progress, as we will meet to reaffirm the commitments and obligations that remain to be implemented, so as to assist victims and prevent potential victims from experiencing the suffering engendered by the use and the continued existence of such weapons.

As a State party to the Ottawa Convention, Jordan has taken effective steps to comply with its provisions and hopes that it will be able to satisfy its treaty obligations by May 2009. Moreover, Jordan attaches great importance to attainment of the universality of the Convention and, in that vein, is currently playing an active role with its partners in promoting the Ottawa Convention in the Middle East region.

Jordan is party to all main international disarmament-related treaties and adheres fully to its obligations under them. In that regard, it stresses the need to reaffirm those instruments and calls for their universality, urging those States that have not signed or acceded to them to do so. The upcoming review conferences of the Convention on Biological and Toxin Weapons and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons are therefore welcome opportunities to reiterate our commitments and enhance our undertakings in their areas of competence.

Last year my country welcomed the Fourth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and views the Declaration it adopted as yet another important step towards demonstrating our collective commitment to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Next year the preparatory process for the 2010 NPT Review Conference will begin. My delegation believes that in this regard the international community should continue to strive to attain the goals of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, as set out in the international non-proliferation regime. Universal adherence to the NPT should still be pursued, as should the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Furthermore, while respect for the inalienable right of developing countries to engage in the research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination should be stressed, it should also be recalled that all disputes arising in that context should be settled in a peaceful and diplomatic manner.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones remains vital for maintaining the international non-proliferation regime and consolidating international peace and security. Jordan welcomes those established throughout the world, including the signing in September 2006, in Semipalatinsk, of the Treaty on a nuclear-weapon-free-zone by the five Central Asian countries. In that regard, my delegation reiterates that the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons in the Middle East region is of utmost importance. Israel's accession to the NPT is therefore vital in this regard, as it would defuse existing tensions, bring about tangible progress on other bilateral tracks of the peace process, enhance confidence-building measures between all parties, and have an overall positive impact on regional peace and security. Implementation of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safety measures on its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities would furthermore prevent the occurrence of potential nuclear accidents and the risk of radiological contamination.

The urgent need to address the threats posed by the possibility of non-State actors or terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction was addressed by the adoption and recent extension of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). This year Jordan provided additional information to complement the report it submitted earlier on its implementation, upon request of the Committee.

Finally, let me conclude with an observation. After 61 years, a woman is finally chairing our Committee. Common collective wisdom should indicate that it should not take us as long to overcome the current challenges facing our work. Once again, I reiterate my delegation's full support and cooperation and hope for a successful outcome of our work.

Mr. Vila Coma (Andorra): Madam Chairperson, let me begin by congratulating you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. Please be assured of the full support and cooperation of my delegation during the forthcoming session.

Andorra is a small country without an army that has lived in peace with its neighbours for more than 700 years. We neither produce nor export armaments. We do not purchase weapons. The issue of disarmament and non-proliferation is of great concern to us, however, as our security is guaranteed only by countries' collective desire to live in peace and security. It is therefore natural for us to persistently advocate for disarmament and pacifism in international forums. The Andorran people believe in the peaceful settlement of disputes coupled with a firm respect for international law.

Two issues in the nuclear field are of pressing concern at the current session. Andorra urges all parties currently engaged in the Iran nuclear talks to do their utmost to resolve their differences within a diplomatic framework so as not to escalate the current situation into one of far-reaching magnitude. Similarly, my delegation calls upon all States to abide by their international obligations and agreements. The current impasse on the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is of deep concern to my delegation. Andorra urges all those parties involved in the six-party talks to resume their dialogue and reach a solution acceptable to all.

Andorra was also disappointed at the failure to come to any positive agreement either at the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or at the Conference to Review the Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects earlier this year. Similarly, the lack of disarmament language in the 2005 Summit Outcome Document and the current deadlock in the Conference in Disarmament make it imperative for us to work at revitalizing the First Committee in order to come to agreement on concrete disarmament measures.

Andorra is pleased to be able to play its part in the disarmament process. In order to implement and promote the scope of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), Andorra is participating in a technical assistance programme for the monitoring of disarmament in sub-Saharan Africa for the period 2007-2009. We have also decided that Andorra will organize a United Nations training seminar on disarmament for the affected countries.

We welcome Viet Nam's recent ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was itself ratified by Andorra in July this year, and urge the remaining countries needed for the Treaty to come into force to ratify it at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Chairperson: I give the floor to the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mrs. Pellandini (International Committee of the Red Cross): The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has for some years sought to highlight in this forum the humanitarian implications of the many life-and-death issues being discussed under the rubric of arms control and disarmament. Preventing and alleviating the suffering inflicted by weapons and armed conflict are indeed the focus of our daily work.

Significant progress has been possible in this field when it has been given a human face. The adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, the United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War are among the best examples of what can be achieved. It was not so long ago that such issues were not even on the international agenda.

But far more needs to be done. The implementation of each of the agreements I mentioned presents a daunting challenge which will take years of determined effort. Despite the inconclusive Review Conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms, the need to bring the availability of small arms and ammunition under stricter control is no less urgent. Initiatives at the national and regional levels remain an effective avenue for dealing with those issues — supported, where possible, by international normative frameworks.

Among the most important next steps in this field are continued work to implement existing commitments under the Programme of Action, the work of the upcoming Group of Governmental Experts on arms brokering, and efforts to develop an international arms trade treaty. The ICRC strongly supports such a treaty, which would define common standards for regulating arms transfers based on States' responsibilities under international law, including international humanitarian law. We are pleased in this regard to note the reference to this body of law in the draft resolution on this subject.

In less than a month, the Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) will convene in Geneva. As it is the central treaty which regulates conventional weapons on the basis of international humanitarian law, the ICRC takes a very active interest in that Convention.

A highlight of the Review Conference will undoubtedly be the entry into force on 12 November of the new Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War. We strongly urge all States which have not yet done so to ratify this landmark agreement and encourage States parties to begin making plans to develop the Protocol as an operational framework for addressing the growing global burden of explosive remnants of war. It is also time for States parties to conclude five years of work on anti-vehicle mines with the adoption of a new protocol which will significantly enhance the protection of civilians from such weapons — one of which destroyed an ICRC vehicle in the Casamance region of Senegal last month, killing one of our delegates and injuring others.

It is regrettable that progress has not been made in the CCW framework on the issue of cluster munitions. Problems with the accuracy and reliability of many types of cluster munitions have been repeatedly and lethally demonstrated in conflicts in most regions of the world over the past 35 years. Their disproportionate effects on the civilian population and the huge clearance burden they create are well known. The use of cluster munitions can no longer remain unregulated. Although we are encouraged by the increasing numbers of national policy changes regarding such weapons, we urge all States to deal with this matter urgently.

Concerning the Biological Weapons Convention, the Sixth Review Conference later this year will help demonstrate whether the community of States has the will and the wisdom to equip itself with the comprehensive measures it needs to protect itself from the hostile use of biological agents. As we stand at the dawn of the age of biotechnology, few challenges are more important than ensuring that the life sciences are used exclusively for the benefit of humanity. The ICRC's 2002 appeal on biotechnology, weapons and humanity highlighted the myriad developments in the

life sciences which can increase the lethality, target ability and deliverability of biological weapons while at the same time making them more difficult to detect and therefore more attractive. Given the extremely decentralized nature of work in the life sciences, the ICRC's appeal was addressed not only to Governments but to all life scientists and to the biotechnology industry. It called on all actors to assume their responsibility to prevent the hostile use of their knowledge and products.

It is the historic task of the upcoming BWC Review Conference to reaffirm the absolute prohibition on biological weapons contained in the Convention itself and in the 1925 Geneva Protocol, to call on life scientists and industry to join in concerted preventive efforts, and to establish a framework for prevention at the national and international levels. The BWC is a bulwark in the struggle to survive in the face of germs and disease. The ICRC urges States to spare no effort to ensure the effectiveness of that landmark agreement in face of the new challenges it faces.

The Chairperson: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that the number of interventions in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation at a given meeting should be limited to two per item. The first intervention in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation on any item at a given meeting should be limited to 10 minutes, and the second intervention should be limited to five minutes.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): The Armenian delegation apologizes for taking the floor for the second time during the general debate, but I have to exercise our right of reply so as to make some comments regarding the intervention made by the Azerbaijani delegation last Friday.

The representative of Azerbaijan, in his reply to the statement made by the Armenian ambassador, accused him of telling lies and falsehoods, mentioning some distorted facts and misleading figures about the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia.

As for the allegations about falsehoods in the statement made by the Armenian ambassador, I should like to draw the Committee's attention to the following points.

First, the Armenian ambassador said in his statement that we were witnessing an unprecedented growth in the military budget of Azerbaijan, which had doubled and even tripled over the past few years. That enormous growth in military expenditures was called by the Armenian ambassador an obvious manifestation of an arms race policy. We failed to find any information about Azerbaijan's military standing in the reports of the Secretary-General on objective information on military matters, including transparency in military expenditures, for the last five years.

However, according to the information we have gleaned from the official website and official statements made by the leadership of that country, we have concluded that the military budget of Azerbaijan for 2007 is about $900 million, while in 2006 it was about $700 million. Back in 1999, the military budget of that country was only $121 million. Thus the military expenditures of Azerbaijan have increased about eightfold over the past eight years.

We believe that the policy of a country whose military budget is growing at such a rapid pace, coupled with an aggressive rhetoric of military bravado and warmongering used by the leadership of that country, can be called and considered an arms race policy.

Secondly, in his speech the Armenian ambassador expressed serious concerns over violations by Azerbaijan of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty ceilings established for some categories of armaments. Indeed, if we look at the annual exchange of military information distributed within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), we can see that in 2005 Azerbaijan imported 44 battle tanks and 83 large-calibre artillery systems and did not declare any reduction in arms.

The ceilings for the aforementioned categories of armaments are 220 and 280. That country thus exceeded the ceilings in said categories by 41 and 61 units, respectively.

Concerning the fabricated facts and information on the armed forces of Armenia, I would like to point out that Armenia, as a CFE Treaty member country, strictly abides by the established ceilings. In that regard, I invite the members of the Committee to look at the relevant United Nations and OSCE reports and documents on arms control, where they can find accurate information on the Armenian armed forces.

Mr. Mine (Japan): Japan is one of the countries that was quoted by the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ambassador Pak Gil Yon, as having urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon its nuclear programme and exert maximum restraint as concerns nuclear tests. However, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea announced late last night that it had conducted a nuclear test. That act by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, combined with its build-up of ballistic missiles, which may be capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, is a grave problem and raises extremely deep concerns. This is a serious challenge to Japan's security and is totally unacceptable.

Japan strongly protests the actions taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and categorically denounces them. Japan is considering taking swift and strict measures. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must be solely responsible for this situation.

This nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea poses a great threat to the peace and security not only of Japan but also of East Asia and the entire international community. This constitutes a serious challenge to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime and violates not only the Japan-Democratic People's Republic of Korea Pyongyang Declaration and the Joint Statement of the six-party talks but also Security Council resolution 1695 (2006) and the Council's presidential statement issued on 7 October of this year.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's claimed nuclear test, together with its ballistic missile build-up, significantly changes the regional security environment. We have entered a new and more dangerous nuclear age. For that reason, Japan will address the issue in the First Committee as well as in the Security Council, together with the rest of the international community.

As a State Member of the United Nations, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is obliged faithfully to implement Security Council resolution 1695 (2006). Japan once again strongly demands that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea fully implement the Joint Statement of the six-party talks, in which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea committed itself to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes and to returning at an early date to the NPT and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

Lastly, let me quote the words of a surviving Hibaksha, or survivor of the atomic bombing in Hiroshima, who is now 79 years old. I have only a Japanese text; my translation may not be quite correct. She heard the news and lamented this development, saying, the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should please come to Hiroshima and learn about what happened. If he intends to use nuclear testing for its national prestige or for international political intentions, it is a very dangerous idea, and it may lead the whole of humankind to complete destruction.

Mr. Kahiluoto (Finland): I am speaking in my capacity as representative of the presidency of the European Union (EU).

Today the Finnish presidency of the European Union issued a statement on the carrying out of a nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In referring to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the situation today, I wish to read out this statement as a right of reply in this discussion.

> "The Presidency of the European Union strongly condemns the test of a nuclear explosive device by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Carrying out the test was unacceptable. The EU is working in close cooperation with the international community for a decisive international response to this provocative act.
>
> "Defying the Security Council statement of 6 October 2006 and the calls of the international community, this test profoundly jeopardizes regional stability and represents a severe threat to international peace and security. It is a flagrant breach of the December 1991 North-South Denuclearization Declaration. Furthermore, it conflicts completely with Security Council resolution 1695 (2006), unanimously adopted after the launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of ballistic missiles, which underlined the need for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to show restraint and refrain from any action that might aggravate tension.
>
> "The presidency strongly urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to

announce immediately that it will refrain from any further tests of a nuclear device, publicly renounce nuclear weapons and return immediately and without preconditions to the six-party talks, and work towards implementation of the Joint Statement of September 2005, and, in particular, abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes. The EU also urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards obligations. The EU further calls on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty."

This statement was issued last night, New York time, by the EU presidency, which is held by Finland.

Mr. Dong-hee (Republic of Korea): The Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea stated this morning that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was striving to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. However, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea announced yesterday that it had conducted a nuclear test. I have requested the floor to express our deepest frustration and concern over the situation.

The Government of the Republic of Korea strongly condemns the actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Defying repeated warnings from the Government of the Republic of Korea and the international community, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has embarked on a path that poses a grave threat to peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and throughout North-East Asia.

This dashes the international community's hopes of resolving the North Korean nuclear issue and bringing about the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula peacefully, through dialogue. Through its actions, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has unilaterally breached and annulled the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which it signed with my Government in 1991.

The conduct of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea also constitutes a failure to meet its obligations under the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005, on which all parties to the six-party talks concurred, and is in outright defiance of Security Council resolution 1695 (2006) of 15 July. It is a provocative act that cannot be condoned or excused.

My delegation urges North Korea to abandon immediately all nuclear weapons and related programmes, to return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime and to comply faithfully with international norms as a responsible member of the international community.

Mr. MacKay (New Zealand): I wish to refer to the statement made earlier this morning by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In that statement, the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea suggested that those countries which intervened in the general debate asking the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons programme were not motivated by a desire to arrive at a genuine and fair resolution of the nuclear issue. New Zealand was one of the countries that spoke in the general debate and addressed this issue, and the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should have no doubt about the strength of New Zealand's views on the nuclear issue.

In that respect, we wish to deplore the claims made by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea last night that it has conducted a nuclear test, which I note the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, rather strangely, did not refer to in his statement. If the claims by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are true, that action is unpardonable and inconsistent with the behaviour expected of a State seeking security and other guarantees from the global community.

New Zealand therefore joins others in condemning the actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We absolutely reject the use of nuclear weapons and their testing. New Zealand is profoundly concerned by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's flagrant disregard for regional and international peace and security. Its decision to test a nuclear weapon makes a travesty of the spirit of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation regime and also of the global moratorium on nuclear testing that is in place pending the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

As New Zealand stated in the Committee's general debate last week when we addressed this issue,

committed dialogue, rather than military brinksmanship, provides the best possible course of action for achieving a peaceful and comprehensive resolution. We therefore urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to the six-party talks without preconditions, to act in accordance with Security Council resolution 1695 (2006), to work towards the expeditious implementation of the 19 September 2005 Joint Statement, and to refrain from further provocative actions of the sort announced last night.

The Chairperson: The general debate has now come to an end. On this occasion, I should like to offer a few personal observations on our debate.

I note that a large number of delegations participated in the debate. We have heard close to 100 statements — considerably more than in previous years — and the quality of the debate has, in my view, been impressively high. It is also commendable that delegations, by and large, have respected the guidelines for the debate with regard to time limits, presence in the Room at scheduled times, and so on. That augurs well for our efforts to improve the working methods of the Committee.

On a more substantive side, I have the following observations. Profound regret has been expressed over the lack of progress in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament, but delegations have, on the other hand, pledged a willingness to ensure a positive outcome of this session of the Committee.

I have noted that expectations are high for the upcoming Review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). That is encouraging. I have also heard delegations express the hope that the Review Conference on the Biological (Toxin) Weapons Convention (BTWC) in December will move the biological weapons agenda forward. This should be appreciated by all.

Delegations are, not surprisingly, deeply concerned by nuclear proliferation threats. The call for nuclear disarmament is equally of no surprise to me, but the debate has focused not only on nuclear weapons — small arms and light weapons are causing unprecedented human suffering, and I sense that a call for control of the illicit trade in such weapons is consensual. The multilateral arms control machinery is in deep need of improvement. We can, and should, do better, since this is also seen to be a consensual sentiment.

We live in a time characterized by a deficit of mutual trust and confidence. This has certainly also been reflected in the general debate, but, as often happens here, there seems to exist common ground as well. It is my hope that this can be further developed during our thematic discussion, not least in our consultations on resolutions and decisions.

I wish representatives all the best in the upcoming deliberations.

In accordance with the Committee's programme of work and timetable, the First Committee will embark on the second phase of its work, namely, thematic discussion decision on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all 'disarmament and international security agenda items, 82 to 97, starting this afternoon.

As I explained previously, there will be no formal list of speakers for the second phase of our work. I would, however, suggest that delegations inform the Secretariat of their plans to speak prior to the specific meeting. If not, request for all interventions will be taken directly from the floor on a given day. I would also urge all delegations to focus their comments on the specific subject that is being discussed at each meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.